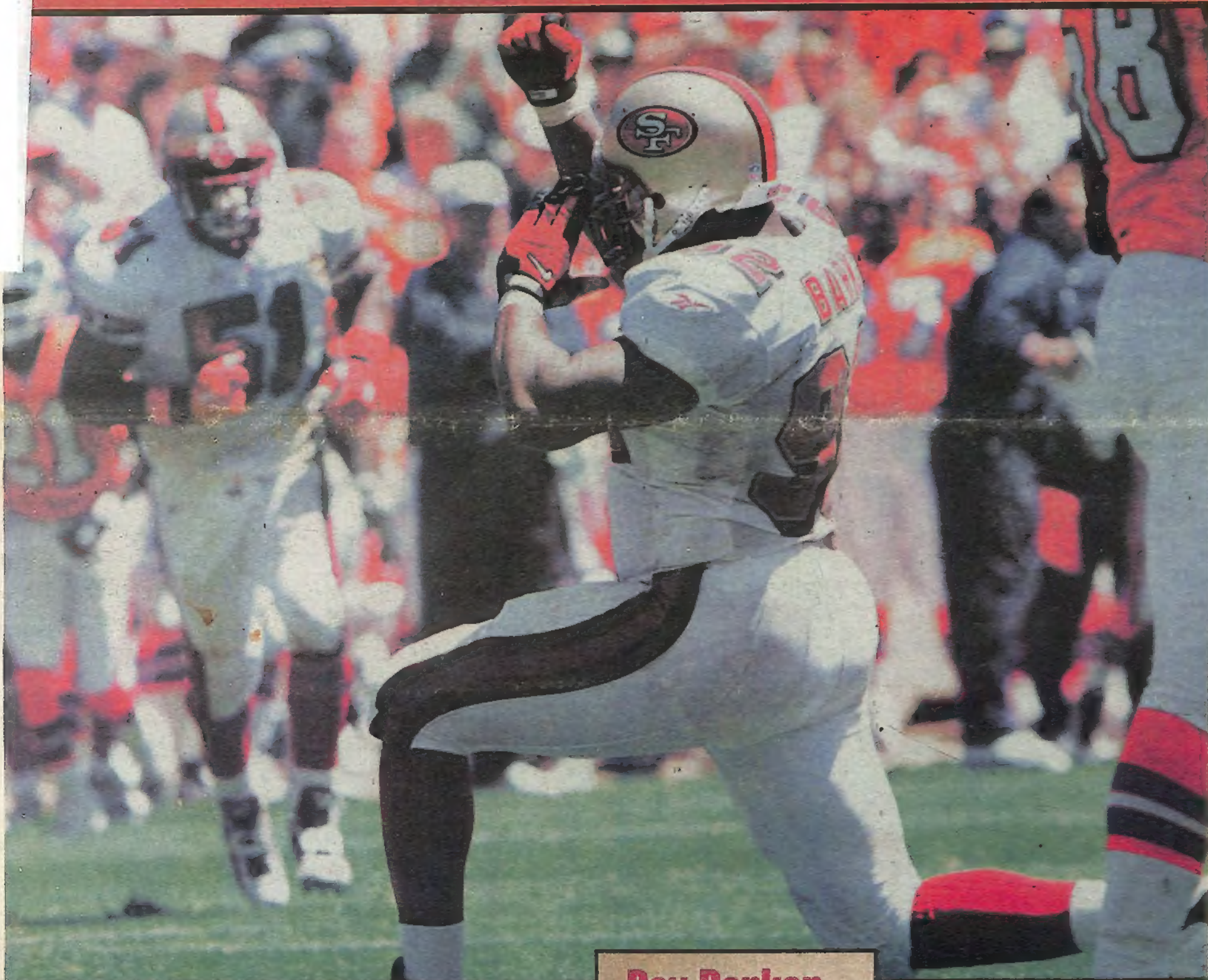


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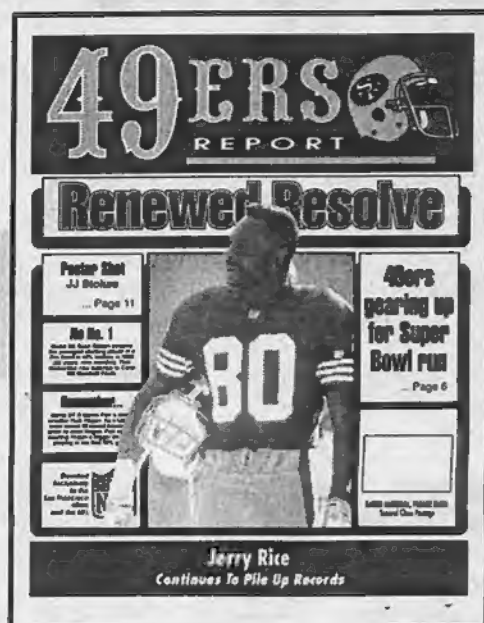
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49ERS REPORT

FEATURES

6 WALKING ART GALLERIES
Tattoos aren't just for sailors and Hell's Angels anymore, and 13 Niners have embraced the fad.

By Kevin Lynch

10 GAMEDAY TWO
The Rams and Niners

DEPARTMENTS

4 NUGGETS

5 COACH'S CORNER
With George Seifert

9 POSTER SHOT
Jeff Wilkins

13 1996 NFL SCHEDULE

14 WHERE ARE THEY NOW

COLUMNS

4 KEVIN LYNCH

15 TIM McDONALD

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FROM THE EDITOR

TAKE FIVE, STEVE



KEVIN LYNCH

Steve Young, put your feet up. Reelax. Take a week off. In fact, take a couple of weeks off. Take all the time you need to recover from that nasty pulled groin. The fact is, Steve, the Niners don't need you, at least not yet.

After the first two weeks of the season the 49ers found they don't need Steve Young, Jerry Rice or the rest of their vaunted offense. The defense is so dominant, the club could exist on the defense's play alone to finish off their season. Heck, this defense is finishing off everything else.

FOR THE FIRST TIME in a long time the 49ers' offense is in an unheard-of position of taking a backseat to the defense. Ever since the club's inception, the 49ers have been renowned for offense. Frankie Albert, Alyn Beals, the Million Dollar Backfield, John Brodie, Gene Washington — the litany of offensive stars is unending. Even in the championship years, the success seemed all predicated on offense — Bill Walsh, Joe Montana, Dwight Clark and Roger Craig. They were the ones who captured the championships, or so it was perceived.

Somewhere lost in the footnotes was the defense's contribution.

But if the 49ers continue to stifle offenses like they did last Sunday against the Rams, there will be little choice but to tout the defense.

The Rams needed visas to enter 49ers territory on Sun-

day. They didn't step over the 50-yard line until 2:17 remained in the third quarter. By that time, the game was neatly tucked away and snoring in the 49ers' win column.

The Rams are a young team, but no slouches when it comes to offense. Yet, against the 49ers they managed just 105 yards of total offense. It was the fewest yards a 49ers' defense had allowed since holding the Bears to 69 on Oct. 23, 1977.

The Rams had more total drives (13) than first downs (6). On a team revered for offense, the 49ers had recorded more safeties (2) than passing touchdowns (0) last weekend.

The 49ers were so good they were bickering about who would make the most big plays.

"Sometimes the sacks came too quick," safety Tim McDonald said, "because we (the secondary) were in position to make some big interceptions back there."

MCDONALD THEN QUICKLY remembered he was a few lockers down from 285-pound defensive tackle Bryant Young.

"But, we'll take the sacks," he said.

The 49ers recorded seven sacks for the day, with Young helping himself to three of those. He would also add three other tackles, a fumble recovery, and the enduring respect of those who witnessed his incredible afternoon.

Guard Derrick Deese said you could do everything right as linemen, but still be wrong against Young.

"You can set up perfectly, have your weight as low as it can go, and he's still unstoppable," Deese said. "B.Y. is amazing."

The Rams have been playing against Young and fellow defensive tackle Dana Stubblefield for the last two seasons,

and they know what kind of havoc they can wreck. That's why Coach Rich Brooks moved Bern Brostek from center to guard. He hoped Brostek, the Rams' best lineman, would be able to contend with Stubblefield man-to-man.

AT THE START OF THE GAME, the Rams wanted to run at Stubblefield and linebacker Ken Norton. The strategy backfired big-time. Stubblefield tossed blockers aside and put the squeeze on rookie runner Lawrence Phillips. What Stubblefield didn't get, Norton cleaned up.

Then, when it came to pass rushing, Stubblefield usually got doubled-teamed by Brostek and center Mark Gruttaduari. It left Young alone against Dwayne White.

"You know when one guy gets doubled-teamed the other guy has to get pressure and come up with the sacks," Stubblefield said, "and that's what B.Y. did today."

When asked about the defensive line, the offensive line just smiles.

"We have to go against them six days a week," Deese said. "Then the other guys get a nightmare for a day."

"I tell Stubby (before the game) to give them that Rocklin stuff," guard Ray Brown said, alluding to training camp, "because it made us sick."

Brown's not lying. More players were treated for dehydration this year than any other year at Rocklin. Most of the those players were offensive guys who had to deal with the heat of the day, and the heat of the 49ers' front four.

"We haven't even tapped into our talent," Stubblefield said. "You haven't seen the best of our defensive line."

Hey Steve, go to Hawaii. The defense will call you in December, in time for playoffs and that big bowl they play at the end of January. Until then, just take it easy. ☺

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DEFENSIVE LINE ROTATION COULD END

The 49ers were one of the first teams to rotate their defensive linemen. The idea was to keep their linemen fresh, and confound offensive linemen by changing players on them.

THE ACQUISITION of defensive ends Chris Doleman and Roy Barker might signal an end to that practice. Starting linemen Barker, Doleman, Dana Stubblefield and Bryant Young rarely got breaks in regular-season opener against the Saints.

"Barker and Doleman are stay-in-the-game-for-the-duration players," Coach George Seifert said. "That's something that's different and unique to us."

The idea of rotating is something new to Doleman. He has been a player who rarely saw the sidelines through his 12-year career.

"If I'm capable of practicing, then I want to be rewarded on game day," Doleman said. "I'm not a part-time player. I don't think that's what they want. If I can play one through three (downs) then I should play one through three."

Doleman would like it to be left up to him as to when he takes a rest and when he doesn't. Some are concerned Doleman, soon to be 35, wore down toward the end of last season. In the last two seasons his sack totals dipped into single digits after registering at least 11 for five of seven seasons. He had nine sacks in 1995, and 3 1/2 of those came on opening day.

DOLEMAN poo-poo's the age factor.

"I can still move around," he said. "Steve (Young) and I are the same age. I don't see

them asking him to take any plays off."

While Doleman didn't get many sacks towards the end of last season, he was putting pressure on quarterbacks. He was one of the key factors in the Falcons' victory over the 49ers on the last weekend of the regular season last year.

OTHER STARTERS aren't keen on situational substituting, either.

"I don't like third-down situations when they bring in the other defensive ends," Stubblefield said. "You don't know what the new guy's thinking."

How much substituting the line will do is to be determined.

"We've got to get a better feel for them (the new defensive ends) and in fact, what their endurance level is," Seifert said.



Roy Barker



What,
Steve
Worry?

Despite receiving four stitches in his chin after being sacked by Saints defensive end Renaldo Turnbull, Steve Young said he's not worried about pass protection.

"We're just going to work through that," Young said. "We don't even talk about it that much. Don't even worry about it. I don't even think about it that much, to be honest."

Ironically, Young made these comments after cautioning a radio reporter not to jab him in his damaged chin with a microphone.

Young said Turnbull apologized to him after the incident.

"He said he didn't mean to do it, but that I turned right into him. He's a good guy."

Young expected to have the stitches out last week.

James Williams Re-Acquired

Cornerback James Williams was re-signed last week. The former starter for the Bills had a good preseason, but was nevertheless released in the last cutdown.

Williams was brought back, and running back Jamal Willis was released. The team was high on Willis, a rookie free agent last season, but he sustained a knee injury during the season and got very few opportunities in training camp this summer.

The 49ers almost had to re-sign another cornerback after starting the season with just three cornerbacks on their roster.

HANKS HAZED OVER RAISE

The news that safety Merton Hanks was on the verge of signing a seven-year \$22-23 million deal, was the subject of good-natured locker room fun.

Offensive tackle Harris Barton got the attention of the entire room, and then equipment man Bronco Hinek wheeled out a paycheck on a dolly. He stopped in front of Hanks and strapped on a weight belt, and lifted it with feigned effort.

"That's a baseball contract," offensive tackle Steve Wallace bellowed as Hinek went through his antics.

"That's when I know it's a decent contract, because of stuff just like that," Hanks said, smiling.

B.Y. Fined ... Almost

Defensive tackle Bryant Young was apparently shocked to find a letter from the NFL saying they were slapping him with \$40,000 fine for getting kicked out the opener for fighting.

It was just a prank by tight ends Brent Jones and Ted Popson, who wrote the note on official-looking stationary.

Young reportedly will be fined \$5,000 for throwing punches at Saints offensive linemen Jim Dombrowski and Ed King.

"There's always going to be some pushing and shoving," Young said. "I think he (the referee) went a little far in throwing me out of the game."

INJURIES

Defensive end Chris Doleman came up with a knee injury late last week, but it wasn't expected to sideline him. Should Doleman ever miss time, Daved Benefield and Daryl Price would be possible replacements, according to defensive coordinator Pete Carroll.

Ray Brown also missed practice time last week, also because of a knee problem, but was expected to play on Sunday.

Linebacker Gary Plummer will probably return after the bye week for the Panthers game. Plummer had a screw removed from his broken wrist last week.

WORTH NOTING

George Seifert said 1996 No. 1 draft pick Israel Ifeanyi was inactive for the opener because of a personnel decision and not an injury ... Club president Carmen Policy said the team's new uniforms are in observance of the 49ers' 50th anniversary season, but that the team might make the switch permanent ... DE Chris Doleman was asked before the season began if he were brought in as a hired gun. "I like to stay away from those clichés," Doleman said. "I'm just another spoke in the wheel." ... The 49ers made a practice squad change, releasing CB Eric Carter and signing former Cal-Berkeley CB Reynard Rutherford.

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GEORGE SEIFERT

Q. FROM WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN SO FAR FROM STEVE WALLACE, DO YOU SEE A LOT TO BUILD ON?

A. His run blocking wasn't bad. As far as pass blocking, this will sound funny. The encouraging thing was he wasn't the only one who got beaten. Other offensive linemen clearly

got beaten, also. It was not like there was one guy who was the only one. It means we have room for improvement with everybody. But for the amount of time they all worked together and the way the offense was presented to the defense, I thought it was good.

Q. IS WALLACE A STOP-GAP OR DO YOU THINK HE CAN PLAY THE WHOLE SEASON?

A. It remains to be seen. He's back with us. He's had a couple of days practice with us. He starts the game. We win the game. He did some good things. He had a couple of problems also, as you might expect. But it wasn't horrendous. It's got to get better. But I could point to a number of players who've been here from the start who made maybe as many mistakes.

Q. ARE THE PROBLEMS HE HAD SIMILAR TO THE ONES HE HAD LAST YEAR?

A. No. I don't think Steve played all that badly last year.

I don't think he was as good as he was in prior years. We were in a cap situation. There were a lot of things that played into (Wallace being released). Kirk Scrafford had played so well, we had to make some room (with the salary cap) somewhere. Those were all the elements. Maybe under different circumstances he would have never left the club and we would have kept everybody. But under the circumstances now, we can't do that. Really, we were very fortunate the way it played out.

Q. WHY DOES THE OFFENSIVE LINE GET SO MANY INJURIES?

A. I don't know. You get to a certain stage in your life and your career when you're been knocked around for so many years. And we have some players on the offensive line who've played for a number of years. The injuries stack up through high school and through college, then years they play as professionals. And those things start adding up.

Q. ARE THEY SUBJECTED TO MORE SITUATIONS THAT CAUSE INJURIES?

A. They are from the standpoint of the athletes they're facing and the way their bodies are contorted and the piles that always seem to occur and guys falling across each other's legs.

Q. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO KEEP THE QUARTERBACK FROM GETTING HIT?

A. We try to account for it as much as we can and we continue to do that. There are some things, yes. And then there are some things that are just the nature of the quarterback we have, too. As you noticed (in the Saints game) Jim Everett

didn't get sacked, and Everett maybe got hit once or twice in the course of the game. The ball was going all over the place, too. By the nature of the man (Steve Young) we have, he's going to take some hits where some others might not.

Q. DO YOU CAUTION STEVE YOUNG NOT TO RUN FOR MORE YARDS THAN WHAT'S NEEDED FOR THE FIRST DOWN?

A. He's trying to win the game. He's a competitive player. I think he feels more vulnerable when he's sliding, as opposed to when he's doing one of his Bronko Nagurskis. And I believe he's correct. Watching him out there, he seems to take fewer direct hits and more glancing blows.

Q. IS (RUNNING BACK) TERRY KIRBY GOING TO GET MORE PLAYING TIME?

A. I believe he might, yes. As far as him picking up all the audibles, it's something that'll take a little more time. And he'll be ready for that. I'm impressed by his knowledge and the way he's into the game. He's going to come along pretty well.

Q. WILL HIS ROLE BE TO RELIEVE DEREK LOVILLE?

A. Initially, and then we'll see where that takes us and then we'll kind of see where we go from there. We're fortunate to have him, and I guess the game of football is always competitive. Somebody is always trying to become the No. 1 guy. If you let your guard down, somebody can come in if that somebody demonstrates he's better. As a coach, you can never say there's not competition even once you get into the season. ☺

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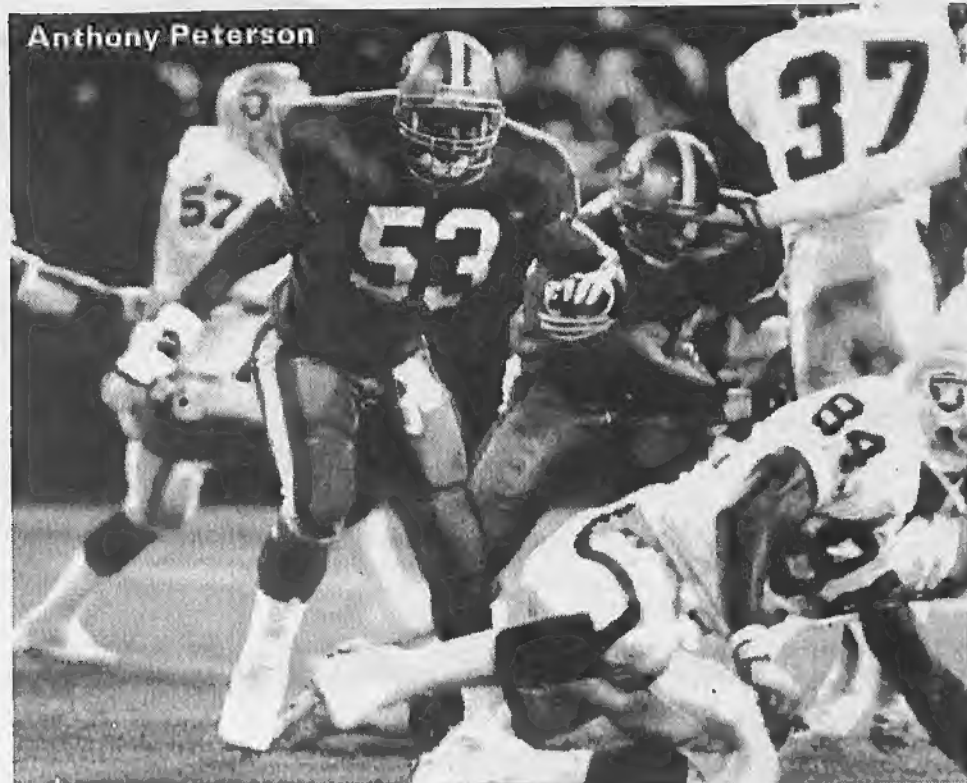
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Off - showing



the
tattoos
that adorn
several 49ers
have significance



By Kevin Lynch

tattoo me!

The tattoo craze is sweeping the nation and several 49ers have been caught in its bristles. We counted and talked to 13 Niners who have embroidered their bodies with the indelible stamps.

Some excused their tattoos as a sign of youthful folly, while others revealed the heart-rending significance behind their deeply personal symbols. Here's their tales of tattoos:

jesse sapolu

He had a dragon tattooed on his substantial right calf in the '94 off-season. Sapolu returned to his native Western Samoa and re-united with childhood friends he hadn't seen for 15 years. His chums had a surprise in store for their cohort, who rose to renown as a four-time Super Bowl participant.

"It was one of those deals that came up all of sudden," Sapolu said.

"It was like, you have to take something back with you."

"They wouldn't let him off that island without a tattoo," is how guard Derrick Deese put it.

Sapolu's friends apparently lured him to a fly-infested grass hut on a humid afternoon. Then they demanded Sapolu get a tattoo the old-fashioned way, with ink from a native plant mixture applied with a scorchingly hot animal tooth.

"I guessed they tested my manhood, so to speak," Sapolu said. "If I had refused, they might think other things."

Like maybe Jess had become a mainland softy, spoiled by the riches he had earned in his years in the NFL.

Sapolu didn't disappoint his lifelong friends. That painful afternoon and the dragon that curls around his calf are enduring testaments to his past.

terry kirby

The newest tattoo and the story of the guy who wears it has a lot in common with the Niners' most senior member. Like Sapolu's, running back Terry Kirby's tattoo is a salute to friendship.

Kirby has a Chargers helmet with No. 92 embroidered on his arm. It's for linebacker David Griggs, a fellow University of Virginia alumnus who died in a car accident in June, 1995.

"I was with him that night," Kirby said.

Kirby was talking to Griggs on a cellular phone when the car spun out of control.

"I don't get them (tattoos) just to get them," Kirby said. "They have to have significance behind them."

Kirby's planning to get another tattoo, this time to commemorate his father, who died this past June.

anthony peterson

When asked how the bull on linebacker Anthony Peterson's chest came about, Peterson says, "silly-assed, dumb-assed college kid decision."

Notre Dame football players Peterson, defensive tackle Bryant Young (now with the Niners) and offensive lineman Aaron Taylor (now with the Packers) ventured to Chicago for a night of revelry. Two of them departed with tattoos.

"I got a bull and Aaron got a panther," Peterson said. "Aaron thinks his tattoo represents his essence, that of a panther. And he says my tat-

too represents my essence, as a bull. But I think that's bull——"

Peterson said that with a laugh.

Peterson has asked his friends in his home town of Monongahela, Pa., to keep their issues of 49ers Report away from his grandmother. She doesn't know about his bullish chest and would be aghast to find out.

Peterson nearly revealed the tattoo to her himself, unknowingly of course. It was right after a Thanksgiving feast and Peterson was pulling up his shirt to give his overstuffed stomach ample breathing space. But in the midst of hiking up his shirt, he caught a glimpse of his mother who was seated next to his grandmother across the table. When his mother's eyes grew to the size of dinner plates, Peterson realized his tattoo was showing. He had pulled his shirt up enough to reveal the hoofs of the bull, but his grandmother wasn't looking.

"She's not going to read this is she?" Peterson asked.

The topic of tattoos allowed Peterson to get in a dig at Young, who didn't get a tattoo with Taylor and Peterson that time.

"He was scared to tears when they saw them burn that bull into my chest," Peterson said in his howling laugh.

Of course, Young has a different story.

bryant young

"I wasn't scared," Young said in a voice that rumbled deep within his 275-pound frame. "I was just checking it out."

One would tend to believe Young's representation of the fact, because he went back later to get a tattoo of his own. Adorning his sizable right deltoid is a rotweiler lying down.

"Rotweilers are cool and calm," said Young, a dog enthusiast. "But once you mess with them, they might attack. Those are probably the best dogs in terms of

obedience and temperament."

Young had a rotweiler of his own that he was forced to give up.

"I wasn't taking care of him in the proper way," Young said. "I gave him to some friends who are giving him a lot of care."

If Young ever misses his furry friend, he has a constant reminder of him stamped right there on his arm.

derek loville

Loville, a running back, is tied for the club lead in tattoos with three. Each has special significance.

On his back is a panther and words in an Asian language that translate to "one love." It's for his son, Che' (pronounced Shea), who died of sudden infant death syndrome in the summer of 1992.

The rest of his tattoos seem to be about how he responded from that tragedy, and his continuing battle for respect in the NFL.

Loville impressed the 49ers in training camp, 1993, but was shelved and eventually released after he suffered a knee injury.

Loville was invited back in 1994 and he won a spot on the team. Last year, after the departure of Ricky Watters, Loville won the starter's job in training camp. He won it again this year.

Fittingly, he has a tattoo ringing one arm with the word "unsung" on it.

On the other arm is a pattern with more Asian words that translate to "courage and strength." Without these two elements Loville never would have gone from rookie free agent to starter on a championship football team.

elvis grbac

On one ankle the 49ers' backup quarterback has an ornate cross and a red rose and labeled with Croatian words that mean "preferred city."

Grbac's parents are Croatian born. The tattoo is in memory of Grbac's father. It also represents all the people who have died in the wars of independence that have raged in the former Yugoslavia for years.

derrick deese

Deese has a large panther cloaking one calf.

"My girl and I decided to get it one day," Deese said.

Deese had the tattoo enlarged in the off-season.

"People kept saying my legs were small, so I got a bigger one," he said. "One of the first things I heard when I came back this year was, 'Are your legs bigger?'"

tyronne drakeford

The starting left cornerback has three tattoos to represent his play on the field. On his back is a tiger. His arm, a panther. And his chest, a scorpion.

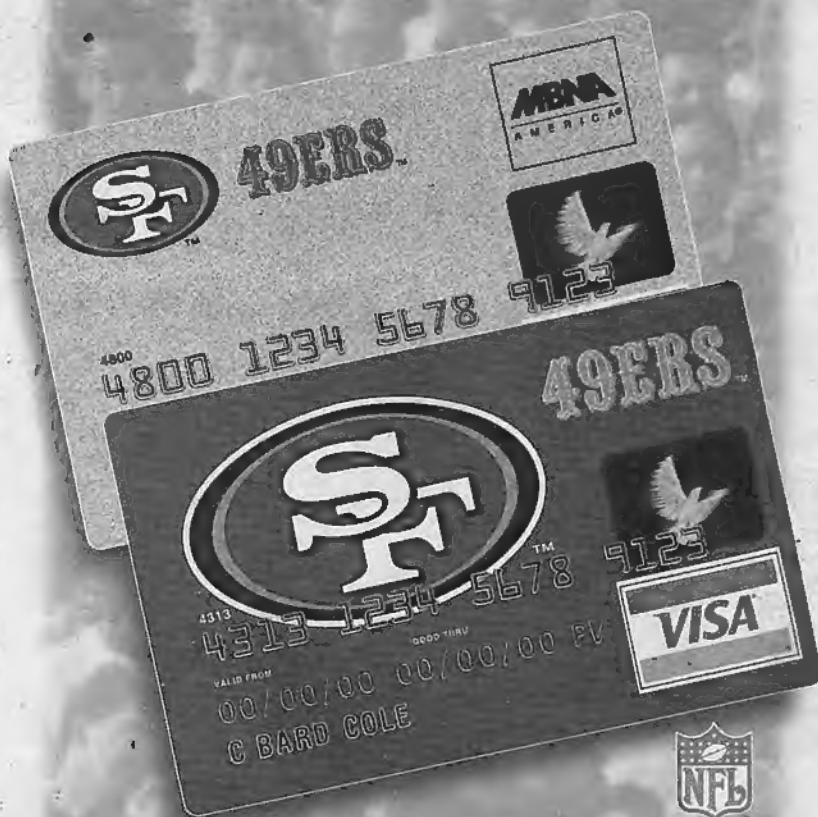
"The panther and the tiger are pretty similar," Drakeford said. "They represent



Bryant Young

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speed and power. If they see something as prey they go after it. I see prey as the receiver.

"The scorpion has a quick bite. It's like jamming (a receiver) at the line of scrimmage. It's a quick attack."

Drakeford needs only to look at himself to remind him of what kind of game he wants to play before he suits up.

dedrick dodge

Dedrick Dodge has a simple slogan gracing his right deltoid—"represent," it reads.

"It's for my grandmother and all the people who raised me," Dodge said. "Every time I'm out in public I represent my folks."

Dodge represents the entire town of Mulberry, Fla., basically. As its most famous resident Dodge was honored with a parade held for him in Mulberry last year.

Dodge is planning another tattoo with the theme of blood, sweat and tears.

"To come up from where I came from took a lot of blood, a lot of sweat and a lot of crying," Dodge said.

marquez pope

Sometimes tattoos seem to appear magically, as if it's an outward manifestation of the soul. That's true for cornerback Marquez Pope, who sprouted the word "warriors" on his arm over the off-season.

"I'm having fun playing," Pope said. "It's a battle. It's just an expression of myself."

jerry rice

A few years ago, Rice got his arm tattooed with a helmet and his No. 80 inside it.

"I wanted something unique," he said.

Rice also said it was his last tattoo.

"You ever had one? They hurt. I don't see how these guys get these huge tattoos."

And this from a man who has had to

endure the pain of never missing a game in his 11-year career.

william floyd

Floyd has several tattoos and brands. Most are associated with his college fraternity, Omega Psi Phi. The prominent one is of a bulldog stamped on his chest. He also has a panther on his forearm.

"I just got that because I was 19 and had nothing else to do," Floyd said. "I will probably get that one removed."

Floyd's fraternity brothers gave him flack for the panther, because he was looked upon as a bulldog in his fraternity.

"I caught a lot of heat for that, with the dog and the cat."

lee woodall

Woodall, a linebacker, is the king of the 49ers' tattoos. He might as well have a sign on his back that says "Under Construction."

Woodall has a huge tattoo of a panther encircled by a sun that nearly covers his entire back. The picture won't be finished until the off-season, when Woodall plans to add some color to it.

"Different people have seen it, and said it's great artwork," Woodall said.

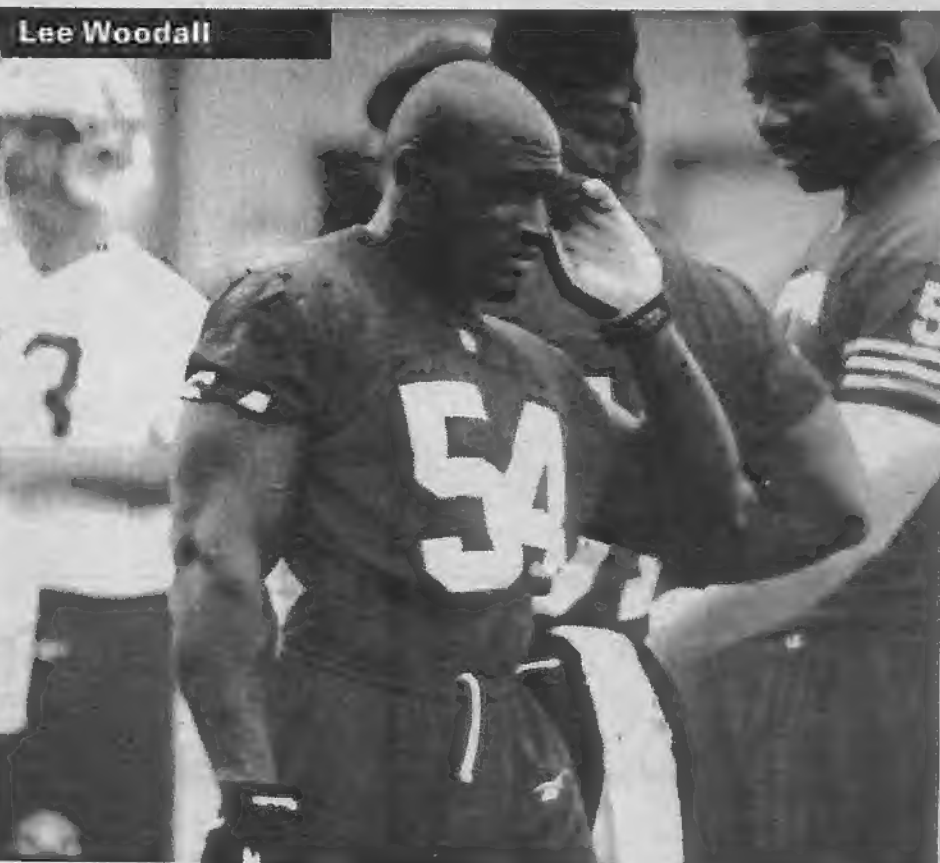
For him, it also has meaning, particularly the symbolism of the sun.

"It represents creation, creativity, strength, power, happiness," he said. "When it's sunny people are usually happy. It makes me feel different."

Woodall also has a scorpion tattooed on his chest, which probably gives him the largest percentage of skin covered by tattoos than any other Niner.

He also says a few more might be coming, but warns, "I'm no Dennis Rodman. I'm not going to marry myself."

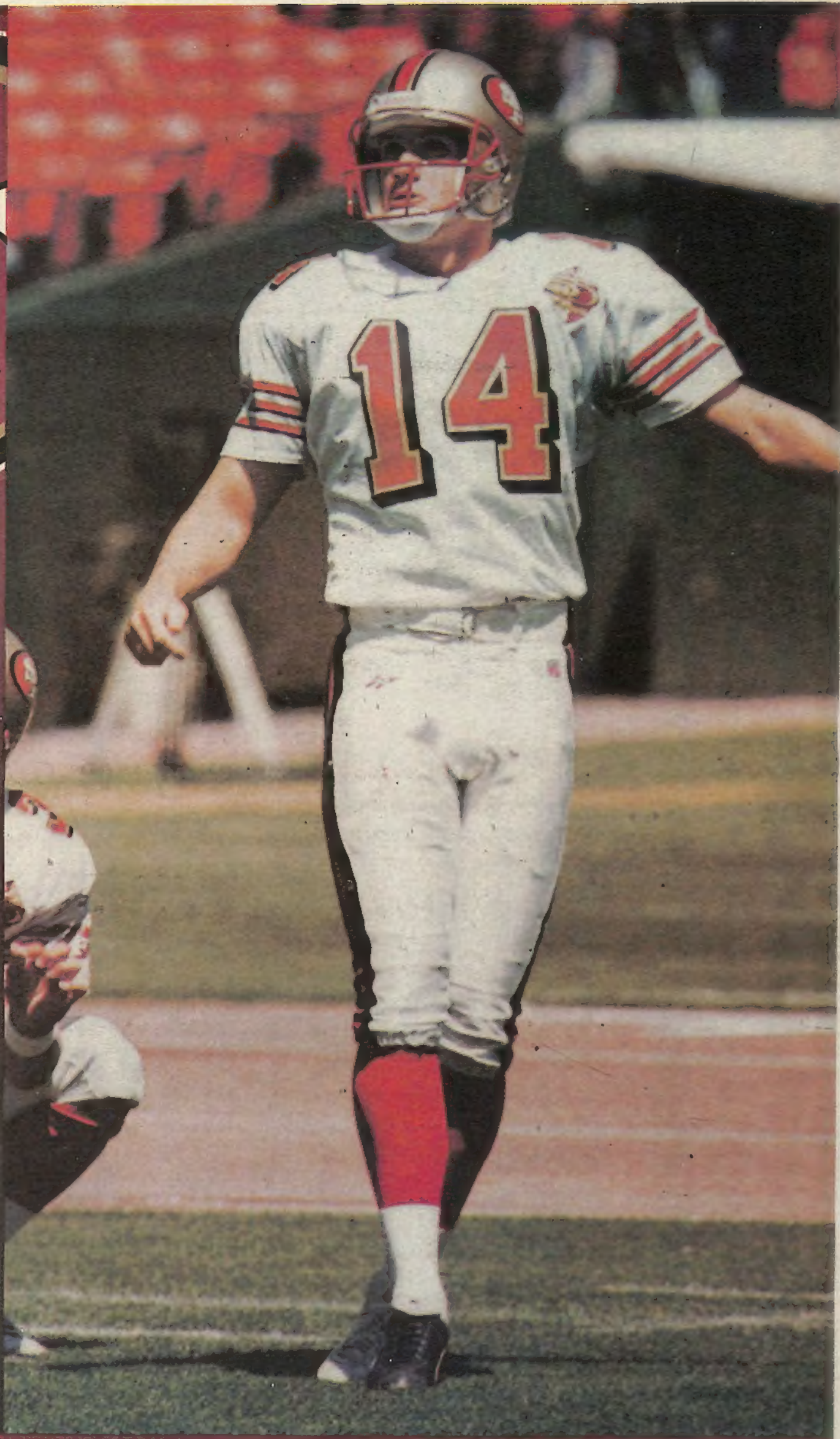
Thirteen people with 13 different slants on their body stamps. It's no wonder teams who play the 49ers often FEEL tattooed.





Jeff Wilkins

Kicker



San Francisco 49ers

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

Niners Continue Their Mastery Over Rams

Rams at 49ers



	1	2	3	4	F
Rams	0	0	0	0	0
49ers	0	14	3	17	34

49ERS

Improve to 2-0 entering by week

RAMS

Now 1-1 after 12th straight loss to 49ers

STEVE YOUNG

15-of-18 passing, 138 yards

ELVIS GRBAC

6-of-12 passing, 86 yards

TONY BANKS

6-of-17 passing, 69 yards

JERRY RICE

7 receptions, 99 yards

49ERS

Outgain Rams 224-114 passing

RAMS

36 yards rushing on 16 attempts

49ERS

7 sacks for 45 yards

By Kevin Lynch

Somewhere over the Western United States, the Rams finally took a breath. For four quarters their offense was suffocated by a defense belonging to the 49ers that dominated them in a 34-0 victory.

That put the Niners in a tie for first place in the NFC West with the Panthers, who are only in their second season in the league. Both are 2-0 and will play each other in Charlotte next week following a bye.

But while the Panthers are hopeful, for these Rams it's simply a new chapter in a continuing story of the Niners' annihilation of them. The Rams have changed coaches, cities and players, but by the end of day the 49ers were delivering their bi-annual thrashing.

The 49ers have beaten the Rams 12 straight times. In the last three games the 49ers have outscored them 119-13.

"I'm not going to say it," said safety Tim McDonald, who last year got in a bit of trouble when he said it was "the same old Rams and the same old 49ers."

THIS TIME, McDonald said, "I have no comment to make about the Rams."

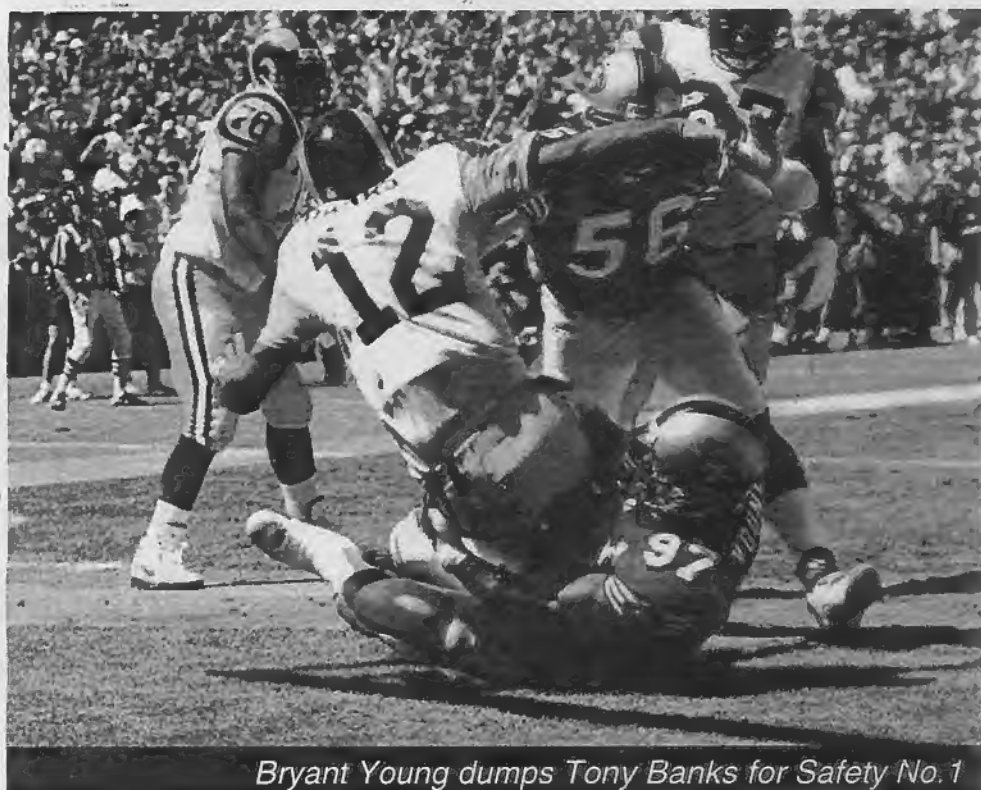
The 49ers seemed to have done all their talking on the field after flooring the Rams once again.

The Rams tried everything to get some semblance of an offense going, including yanking starting quarterback Steve Walsh early in the second quarter and inserting rookie Tony Banks. Unfortunately for Banks they did it with the Rams on their own 1-yard line.

"I was shocked," Niners guard Ray Brown said. "I said, 'Is that the rookie?' That's the kind of decision that can affect them down the road."

A play later, Banks wound up on his back, in the arms of defensive tackle Bryant Young for a safety. That was part of a career day for Young, who finished with three sacks, six tackles and a fumble recovery.

While Bryant Young was terrorizing the offense, quarterback Steve Young was on the sideline. Young aggravated a pulled upper groin when he sprinted for an 11-yard gain in the third quarter. It was an injury he incurred in the opener against the Saints, then aggravated in the first quarter when he was chased out of bounds. Young is probable for the game against the Panthers. Luckily, the 49ers have a bye, which allows Young to give the injury adequate rest.



Bryant Young dumps Tony Banks for Safety No. 1

Despite the pulled muscle Young wanted to continue. "It's the adrenaline," Young said. "I can't explain it. Maybe I'm just not very mature."

With the defense so awesome, the 49ers simply didn't need Young. In fact, they didn't need their offense at all. For the first time in team history, the 49ers notched two safeties in one game. They also had three fumble-causing sacks that led to an additional 10 points.

"In meetings we (offensive players) have to say we scored 34 points," guard Derrick Deese said. "But then we say, 'But how much of that was scored by the defense?'"

THE NINERS GOT THEIR SECOND safety when Joe Valerio air-mailed his snap over punter Sean Landeta, who decided to kick the ball through the end zone instead of risking life and limb by falling on it.

The 49ers had gone 74 games without a safety, then recorded two in one game. It was just one indication of their total monopolization of the Rams. Another was their seven sacks, and another was the fact the Rams didn't cross their own 30-yard line until the third quarter. They didn't pass midfield until 2:17 of the third quarter.

The 49ers also forced three fumbles and had an interception. In the last three meetings they've induced the Rams into a dozen turnovers. The turnovers stymied an already struggling offense and put a strain on the defense.

"As the (offense's) mistakes mounted," Coach Rich Brooks said, "our defense wore down, and the 49ers took advantage of that."

For the second game in a row the 49ers showed greater commitment to the run. They rushed 42 times, more than they did in any of their games last year.

"(The defense's play) allowed us to run the ball, and

W24-0

Young No Cause For Concern

You could tell something was wrong as 49ers quarterback Steve Young galloped like a broken-down draft horse on a third-quarter scramble against the Rams on Sunday.

Limping. Wincing. If it looked painful to watch, it was much worse for Young, who suffered a groin strain on an earlier play that aggravated an injury he sustained the week before.

The good news is Young should be back against the Panthers on Sept. 22, thanks to this week's bye.

"I don't think it's bad," Young said. "I think it'll be fine. I hurt it when I was throwing it away. I'd hurt it last week running out of bounds, then I rehabilitated it during the week. It really felt great. I thought I'd made it totally better, but it got me funny."

Likening the injury to ones incurred by former Niners Eric Wright and Eric Davis, Young thinks specific stomach-strengthening exercises should correct the problem

"I probably should have been doing them anyway, but it should be fine," Young said.

Young, who completed 15 of 18 passes for 138 yards, admitted he felt a groin twinge in the first half, but played through it. When the pain became too great later, George Seifert pulled the plug.

"Maybe I should have had him come out two plays earlier," Seifert said. "He's got the heart of a tiger and wanted to come back."

Thanks to the defense, Young could afford to let Elvis Grbac take over. The pressure was off the offense, and Young stood on the sideline admiring the shutout.

"Our defense looks like it's running downhill," Young said. "It really does. And it looks like the other team is playing uphill."

— Dick Draper

that's helpful," Young said.

IN FACT, THE 49ERS might have run too much, particularly when they entered the red zone. The Niners ventured past the Rams' 20-yard line eight times, but managed just three touchdowns and were denied the end zone on fourth-and-goal from the 2 in the second quarter.

"I'd like to have the ball in my hands (in red-zone situations)," Young said.


He'd like to throw into the end zone, something the 49ers failed to do in their eight trips into the red zone.

Despite 42 attempts, the most in one game in two years, they gained just 129 yards rushing. But they were effective in controlling the clock (they had possession for 38:37).

They were also able to accommodate Derek Loville, who had been asking to run the draw out of the one-back set. Loville got that chance three times and the result was one 7-yard run, a 3-yard gain, and a two-yard touchdown.

But with a smothering defense, it doesn't seem to matter what the offense does.

"You haven't even seen our best football yet," defensive tackle Dana Stubblefield said.

In light of the whitewash of the Rams, that's a scary thought. 

HOW THEY SCORED

SECOND QUARTER

49ERS — Safety, Tony Banks tackled in end zone. Time remaining: 11:44. 49ERS 2-0.

49ERS — Derek Loville 2-yard run (Jeff Wilkins kick). Drive: 10 plays, 59 yards. Time of possession: 5:54. Time remaining: 5:50. Key plays: Loville 13 run; Jerry Rice 5 pass from Steve Young. 49ERS 9-0.

49ERS — Wilkins 38-yard field goal. Drive: 8 plays, 47 yards. Time of possession: 2:09. Time remaining: :45. Key plays: J.J. Stokes 21 pass from Young; Rice 9 pass from Young; Stokes 28 pass from Young. 49ERS 12-0.

49ERS — Safety, ball snapped out of end zone. Time remaining: :09. 49ERS 14-0.

THIRD QUARTER

49ERS — Wilkins 22-yard field goal. Drive: 6 plays, 15 yards. Time of possession: 3:18. Time remaining: 3:47. Key plays: Chris Doleman fumble recovery at Rams' 19; Loville 7 run. 49ERS 17-0.

FOURTH QUARTER

49ERS — Wilkins 21-yard field goal. Drive: 10 plays, 77 yards. Time of possession: 3:53. Time remaining: 10:13. Key plays: Rice 24 pass from Elvis Grbac; Rice 39 pass from Grbac. 49ERS 20-0.

49ERS — Tommy Vardell 1-yard run (Wilkins kick). Drive: 5 plays, 51 yards. Time of possession: 2:57. Time remaining: 6:42. Key plays: Stokes 13 pass from Grbac; Rice 24 pass from Grbac. 49ERS 27-0.

49ERS — Dexter Carter 1-yard run (Wilkins kick). Drive: 5 plays, 19 yards. Time of possession: 2:40. Time remaining: 3:15. Key plays: Bryant Young fumble recovery on Rams' 19; Carter 11 run. 49ERS 34-0.

WORTH NOTING

SAFETY RECORD: The two safeties the 49ers scored on Sunday was a team record. It was the 14th time in NFL history a team scored two safeties in one game. The league record is three safeties in one game scored by the Rams versus the Giants on Sept. 30, 1984.

PREVIOUSLY: The last time the 49ers had a safety was Nov. 25, 1991, against the Rams. LB Darin Jordan scored it.

SEVEN-YEAR DROUGHT: The shutout was the first for the 49ers since Dec. 24, 1989, when they blanked the Bears, 26-0. The last time the Niners shut out the Rams was Oct. 28, 1984 (33-0).

THEY'RE SPECIAL PLAYERS: The special teams players took a lot of heat during the preseason for poor snapping, missed field goals, a blocked kick and mediocre coverage. The regular season, however, has seen a 180-degree turnaround. "It was a new scheme and now we're starting to get in the groove," said Jeff Wilkins, who booted field goals of 38, 22 and 21 yards. "And we can't stop now." Tommy Thompson is also doing well, averaging 44.4 yards on 10 punts.

HANKS NEARLY SIGNED: FS Merton Hanks should sign his seven-year, \$22.5 million contract Wednesday or Thursday, according to 49ers vice president Dwight Clark.

WALLACE STRONG: OT Steve Wallace, berated for his poor play in the season opener, more than held his own against Rams DE Leslie O'Neal. O'Neal had only one tackle and no sacks.

INJURY REPORT: For the second straight season, WR Nate Singleton broke his left clavicle. Singleton missed 11 games with the injury last year. Listed as probable for the Panthers game are CB Tyrone Drakeford (knee), SMerton Hanks (leg), OT Steve Wallace (cramps), DT Bryant Young (elbow), QB Steve Young (groin).

RICE COOKING: With his seven receptions, WR Jerry Rice surpassed 950 catches for his career. He now has 954. Rice was just 1 yard away from a 100-yard receiving game. He needs two games of 100 yards or more receiving to have 50 in his career.

BUSY GUY: Rams LB Roman Phifer matched his career high with 14 solo tackles on Sunday. He also had 14 solos against the 49ers on Sept. 22, 1995. He had a career-high 17 total tackles in that game.

ODDS & ENDS: Coach George Seifert planned liberal substitutions on defense in the fourth quarter, but defensive players talked him out of it because they wanted a shutout. The 49ers are 18-1 in the last two seasons when they rush for more than more than 100 yards. The 49ers have scored in 292 straight games, a continuing league record. The last time they were shutout was in Oct. 9, 1977 against the Falcons (7-0). The Niners are 83-7 when scoring 21 points or more since George Seifert became head coach. Rice has not caught a TD pass in 18 quarters. QB Steve Young is 62-38 in games in which he starts. FB Tommy Vardell's six receptions was a career high. The 49ers hadn't notched a sack in 85 plays before getting seven on Sunday. It was the most sacks since Dec. 17, 1994, when they also had seven.

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PLAYER OF THE GAME

Chris Doleman

Chris Doleman was named Player of the Game after a team-leading five solo tackles, one sack, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery.



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Activity	Number of People
30 all	30
27	27
21 camp	21
11	11
224 yds	224
114	114

Player	Yards
21 no	80
224yds	100
14	50
39lg	85
22	45

Player	Yards
42 no.	42
16	16
129 yds.	129
36	36
31 avg.	31
23	23

SEASON STATS

PASSING											
Name	Att	Comp	Yds	Pct	Avg/Att	TD	%TD	Int	%Int	Lg	Lost/Att
Young	47	33	337	70.2	7.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	38	4/20
Grbac	14	6	86	42.9	6.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	39	0/0
Total	61	39	423	63.9	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	39	4/20
Opp. Total	68	27	289	39.7	4.3	1	1.8	2	2.9	28	7/45

Name	Tackles	Assists	Total
Norton	9	2	11
Pope	8	0	8
Mitchell	7	1	8
Dolan	6	1	7
McDonald	5	0	5
Hanks	5	0	5
Barker	4	0	4
Drakeford	4	0	4
Young	3	1	4
Israel	3	0	3
Woodall	2	1	3
Brown	2	0	2
Dodge	2	0	2
Stubbefeld	2	0	2
Bryant	1	0	1

1996

NFL SCHEDULE

STANDINGS

AFC

East	W	L	PF	PA
Bills	2	0	40	30
Colts	2	0	41	20
Dolphins	2	0	48	10
Jets	0	2	13	52
Patriots	0	2	20	41

Cent.	W	L	PF	PA
Jaguars	1	1	51	43
Oilers	1	1	53	47
Ravens	1	1	36	45
Steelers	1	1	40	41
Bengals	0	2	30	53

West	W	L	PF	PA
Broncos	2	0	61	26
Chargers	2	0	56	21
Chiefs	2	0	39	22
Raiders	0	2	17	38
Seahawks	0	2	27	59

NFC

East	W	L	PF	PA
Eagles	1	0	17	14
Cowboys	1	1	33	22
Redskins	1	1	24	20
Cardinals	0	2	13	44
Giants	0	2	20	50

Cent.	W	L	PF	PA
Packers	1	0	34	3
Vikings	2	0	40	30
Bears	1	1	25	16
Buccaneers	0	2	9	55
Lions	1	1	34	23

West	W	L	PF	PA
49ers	2	0	61	11
Panthers	2	0	51	26
Rams	1	1	26	50
Falcons	0	2	23	52
Saints	0	2	31	49



American Football Conference



BILLS 2-0	COLTS 2-0	DOLPHINS 2-0	JETS 0-2	PATRIOTS 0-2
Sept. 1 at Giants 23-20 O.T. Sept. 8 Patriots 17-10 Sept. 16 at Steelers Sept. 22 Cowboys Sept. 29 OPEN Oct. 6 Colts Oct. 13 Dolphins Oct. 20 at Jets Oct. 27 at Patriots Nov. 3 Redskins Nov. 10 at Eagles Nov. 17 Bengals Nov. 24 Jets Dec. 1 at Colts Dec. 8 at Seahawks Dec. 15 at Dolphins Dec. 22 Chiefs	Sept. 1 Cardinals 20-13 Sept. 8 at Jets 21-7 Sept. 15 at Cowboys Sept. 23 Dolphins Sept. 29 OPEN Oct. 6 at Bills Oct. 13 Ravens Oct. 20 Patriots Oct. 27 at Redskins Nov. 3 Chargers Nov. 10 at Dolphins Nov. 17 Jets Nov. 24 at Patriots Dec. 1 Bills Dec. 5 Eagles Dec. 15 at Chiefs Dec. 22 at Bengals	Sept. 1 Patriots 24-10 Sept. 8 at Cardinals 24-0 Sept. 15 Jets Sept. 22 at Colts Sept. 29 OPEN Oct. 6 Seahawks Oct. 13 at Bills Oct. 20 at Eagles Oct. 27 Cowboys Nov. 3 Colts Nov. 10 at Patriots Nov. 17 at Oilers Nov. 25 Steelers Dec. 1 at Raiders Dec. 8 Giants Dec. 15 Bills Dec. 22 at Jets	Sept. 1 at Broncos 6-31 Sept. 8 Colts 7-21 Sept. 15 at Dolphins Sept. 22 Giants Sept. 29 at Redskins Oct. 6 Raiders Oct. 13 at Jaguars Oct. 20 Bills Oct. 27 at Cardinals Nov. 3 OPEN Nov. 10 Patriots Nov. 17 at Colts Nov. 24 at Bills Dec. 1 Oilers Dec. 8 at Patriots Dec. 14 Eagles Dec. 22 Dolphins	Sept. 1 at Dolphins 10-24 Sept. 8 at Bills 10-17 Sept. 15 Cardinals Sept. 22 Jaguars Sept. 29 OPEN Oct. 6 at Ravens Oct. 13 Redskins Oct. 20 at Colts Oct. 27 Bills Nov. 3 Dolphins Nov. 10 at Jets Nov. 17 Broncos Nov. 24 Colts Dec. 1 at Chargers Dec. 8 Jets Dec. 15 at Cowboys Dec. 21 at Giants
BENGALS 0-2	JAGUARS 1-1	OILERS 1-1	RAVENS 1-1	STEELERS 1-1
Sept. 1 at Rams 16-26 Sept. 8 at Chargers 14-27 Sept. 15 Saints Sept. 22 OPEN Sept. 29 Broncos Oct. 6 Oilers Oct. 13 at Steelers Oct. 20 at 49ers Oct. 27 Jaguars Nov. 3 at Ravens Nov. 10 Steelers Nov. 17 at Bills Nov. 24 Falcons Dec. 1 at Jaguars Dec. 8 Ravens Dec. 15 at Oilers Dec. 22 Colts	Sept. 1 Steelers 27-34 Sept. 8 Oilers Sept. 15 at Raiders Sept. 22 at Patriots Sept. 29 Panthers Oct. 6 at Saints Oct. 13 Jets Oct. 20 at Rams Oct. 27 at Bengals Nov. 3 OPEN Nov. 10 Ravens Nov. 17 at Steelers Nov. 24 at Ravens Dec. 1 Bengals Dec. 8 Oilers Dec. 15 Seahawks Dec. 22 Falcons	Sept. 1 Chiefs 19-20 Sept. 8 at Jaguars 34-27 Sept. 15 Ravens Sept. 22 OPEN Sept. 29 at Steelers Oct. 6 at Bengals Oct. 13 at Falcons Oct. 20 Steelers Oct. 27 49ers Nov. 3 at Seahawks Nov. 10 at Saints Nov. 17 Dolphins Nov. 24 Panthers Dec. 1 at Jets Dec. 8 Jaguars Dec. 15 Bengals Dec. 22 at Ravens	Sept. 1 Raiders 19-19 Sept. 8 at Steelers 17-31 Sept. 15 at Oilers Sept. 22 OPEN Sept. 29 Saints Oct. 6 Patriots Oct. 13 at Colts Oct. 20 at Broncos Oct. 27 Rams Nov. 3 Bengals Nov. 10 at Jaguars Nov. 17 at 49ers Nov. 24 Jaguars Dec. 1 Steelers Dec. 8 at Bengals Dec. 15 at Panthers Dec. 22 Oilers	Sept. 1 at Jaguars 9-24 Sept. 8 Ravens 31-17 Sept. 15 Bills Sept. 22 OPEN Sept. 29 Oilers Oct. 6 at Chiefs Oct. 13 Bengals Oct. 20 at Oilers Oct. 27 at Falcons Nov. 3 Rams Nov. 10 at Bengals Nov. 17 Jaguars Nov. 25 at Dolphins Dec. 1 at Ravens Dec. 8 Chargers Dec. 15 49ers Dec. 22 at Panthers
BRONCOS 2-0	CHARGERS 2-0	CHIEFS 2-0	RAIDERS 0-2	SEAHAWKS 0-2
Sept. 1 Jets 31-6 Sept. 8 at Seahawks 30-20 Sept. 15 Buccaneers Sept. 22 at Chiefs Sept. 29 at Bengals Oct. 6 Chargers Oct. 13 OPEN Oct. 20 Ravens Oct. 27 Chiefs Nov. 4 at Raiders Nov. 10 Bears Nov. 17 at Vikings Nov. 24 at Seahawks Dec. 1 Packers Dec. 8 Raiders Dec. 15 at Raiders Dec. 22 at Chargers	Sept. 1 Seahawks 29-7 Sept. 8 Bengals 27-14 Sept. 15 at Packers Sept. 22 at Raiders Sept. 29 Chiefs Oct. 6 at Broncos Oct. 13 OPEN Oct. 20 Raiders Oct. 27 at Seahawks Nov. 3 Colts Nov. 10 Lions Nov. 17 Buccaneers Nov. 24 at Chiefs Dec. 1 Patriots Dec. 8 at Steelers Dec. 14 at Bears Dec. 22 Broncos	Sept. 1 at Oilers 20-19 Sept. 8 Raiders 19-3 Sept. 15 at Seahawks Sept. 22 Broncos Sept. 29 at Chargers Oct. 6 Steelers Oct. 13 OPEN Oct. 20 Seahawks Oct. 27 at Broncos Nov. 3 at Vikings Nov. 10 Packers Nov. 17 Bears Nov. 24 Chargers Nov. 28 at Lions Dec. 9 at Raiders Dec. 15 Colts Dec. 22 at Bills	Sept. 1 at Ravens 14-19 Sept. 8 at Chiefs 3-19 Sept. 15 Jaguars Sept. 22 Chargers Sept. 29 at Bears Oct. 6 at Jets Oct. 13 Lions Oct. 20 at Chargers Oct. 27 OPEN Nov. 4 Broncos Nov. 10 at Buccaneers Nov. 17 Vikings Nov. 24 at Seahawks Dec. 1 Dolphins Dec. 8 Chiefs Dec. 15 at Broncos Dec. 22 Seahawks	Sept. 1 at Chargers 20-30 Sept. 8 Broncos Sept. 15 Chiefs Sept. 22 at Buccaneers Sept. 29 Packers Oct. 6 at Dolphins Oct. 13 OPEN Oct. 20 at Chiefs Oct. 27 Chargers Nov. 3 Oilers Nov. 10 Vikings Nov. 17 at Lions Nov. 24 Raiders Dec. 1 at Broncos Dec. 8 Bills Dec. 15 at Jaguars Dec. 22 at Raiders

National Football Conference



CARDINALS 0-2	COWBOYS 1-1	EAGLES 1-0	GIANTS 0-2	REDSKINS 1-1
Sept. 1 at Colts 13-20 Sept. 8 Dolphins 0-24 Sept. 15 at Patriots Sept. 22 at Saints Sept. 29 Rams Oct. 6 OPEN Oct. 13 at Cowboys Oct. 20 Buccaneers Oct. 27 Jets Nov. 3 at Giants Nov. 10 at Redskins Nov. 17 Giants Nov. 24 Eagles Dec. 1 at Vikings Dec. 8 Cowboys Dec. 15 Redskins Dec. 22 at Eagles	Sept. 2 at Bears 6-22 Sept. 8 Giants 27-0 Sept. 15 Colts Sept. 22 at Bills Sept. 29 at Chiefs Oct. 6 Packers Oct. 13 Cardinals Oct. 20 Falcons Oct. 27 at Dolphins Nov. 3 Eagles Nov. 10 at 49ers Nov. 18 Packers Nov. 24 at Giants Nov. 28 Redskins Dec. 8 at Cardinals Dec. 15 Patriots Dec. 22 at Redskins	Sept. 1 at Redskins 17-14 Sept. 8 Packers Sept. 15 Lions Sept. 22 at Falcons Sept. 29 Cowboys Oct. 6 OPEN Oct. 13 at Giants Oct. 20 Dolphins Oct. 27 Panthers Nov. 3 at Cowboys Nov. 10 Bills Nov. 17 Redskins Nov. 24 at Cardinals Dec. 1 Giants Dec. 5 at Colts Dec. 14 at Jets Dec. 22 Cardinals	Sept. 1 Bills 20-23 OT Sept. 8 at Cowboys 0-27 Sept. 15 Redskins Sept. 22 at Jets Sept. 29 Vikings Oct. 6 OPEN Oct. 13 Eagles Oct. 20 at Redskins Oct. 27 at Lions Nov. 3 Cardinals Nov. 10 at Panthers Nov. 17 at Cardinals Nov. 24 Cowboys Dec. 1 at Eagles Dec. 8 at Dolphins Dec. 15 Saints Dec. 21 Patriots	Sept. 1 Eagles 14-17 Sept. 8 Bears 10-3 Sept. 15 at Giants Sept. 22 at Rams Sept. 29 Jets Oct. 6 OPEN Oct. 13 at Patriots Oct. 20 Giants Oct. 27 Colts Nov. 3 Cardinals Nov. 10 Cardinals Nov. 17 at Eagles Nov. 24 49ers Nov. 28 at Cowboys Dec. 8 at Buccaneers Dec. 15 at Cardinals Dec. 22 Cowboys
BEARS 1-1	BUCS 0-2	LIONS 1-1	PACKERS 1-0	VIKINGS 2-0
Sept. 2 Cowboys 22-6 Sept. 8 at Redskins 3-10 Sept. 15 Vikings Sept. 22 at Lions Sept. 29 Raiders Oct. 6 Packers Oct. 13 at Saints Oct. 20 OPEN Oct. 27 at Vikings Nov. 3 Buccaneers Nov. 10 at Broncos Nov. 17 at Chiefs Nov. 24 Lions Dec. 1 at Packers Dec. 8 Rams Dec. 14 Chargers Dec. 22 at Buccaneers	Sept. 1 Packers 3-34 Sept. 8 at Lions 6-21 Sept. 15 at Broncos Sept. 22 Seahawks Sept. 29 Lions Oct. 6 OPEN Oct. 13 Vikings Oct. 20 at Cardinals Oct. 27 at Packers Nov. 3 Bears Nov. 10 Raiders Nov. 17 at Chargers Nov. 24 Saints Dec. 1 at Panthers Dec. 8 Redskins Dec. 15 at Vikings Dec. 22 Bears	Sept. 1 at Vikings 13-17 Sept. 8 Buccaneers 21-6 Sept. 15 at Eagles Sept. 22 Bears Sept. 29 at Buccaneers Oct. 6 Falcons Oct. 13 at Raiders Oct. 20 OPEN Oct. 27 Giants Nov. 3 at Packers Nov. 10 at Chargers Nov. 17 Seahawks Nov. 24 at Bears Nov. 28 Chiefs Dec. 1 Vikings Dec. 8 Packers Dec. 15 at 49ers Dec. 23	Sept. 1 at Buccaneers 34-3 Sept. 8 Eagles Sept. 15 Chargers Sept. 22 at Vikings Sept. 29 at Seahawks Oct. 6 Bears Oct. 13 49ers Oct. 20 OPEN Oct. 27 Buccaneers Nov. 3 Lions Nov. 10 at Chiefs Nov. 17 at Cowboys Nov. 24 at Rams Dec. 1 Bears Dec. 8 Broncos Dec. 15 at Lions Dec. 22 Vikings	Sept. 1 Lions 17-13 Sept. 8 at Falcons 27-17 Sept. 15 at Bears Sept. 22 Packers Sept. 29 at Giants Oct. 6 Panthers Oct. 13 at Buccaneers Oct. 20 OPEN Oct. 27 Bears Nov. 3 Chiefs Nov. 10 at Seahawks Nov. 17 at Raiders Nov. 24 Broncos Dec. 1 Cardinals Dec. 8 at Lions Dec. 15 Buccaneers Dec. 22 Packers
49ERS 2-0	FALCONS 0-2	PANTHERS 2-0	RAMS 1-1	SAINTS 0-2
Sept. 1 Saints 27-11 Sept. 8 Rams 34-0 Sept. 15 OPEN Sept. 22 at Panthers Sept. 29 Falcons Oct. 6 at Rams Oct. 14 at Packers Oct. 20 Bengals Oct. 27 at Oilers Nov. 3 at Saints Nov. 10 Cowboys Nov. 17 Ravens Nov. 24 at Redskins Dec. 2 Falcons Dec. 8 Panthers Dec. 15 at Steelers Dec. 23 Lions	Sept. 1 at Panthers 6-29 Sept. 8 Vikings 17-23 Sept. 15 OPEN Sept. 22 Eagles Sept. 29 at 49ers Oct. 6 at Lions Oct. 13 Oilers Oct. 20 at Cowboys Oct. 27 Steelers Nov. 3 Panthers Nov. 10 at Rams Nov. 17 Saints Nov. 24 at Bengals Dec. 2 49ers Dec. 8 at Saints Dec. 15 Rams Dec. 22 at Jaguars	Sept. 1 Falcons 29-6 Sept. 8 at Saints 22-20 Sept. 15 OPEN Sept. 22 49ers Sept. 29 at Jaguars Oct. 6 at Vikings Oct. 13 Rams Oct. 20 Saints Oct. 27 at Eagles Nov. 3 at Falcons Nov. 10 Giants Nov. 17 at Rams Nov. 24 at Oilers Dec. 1 Buccaneers Dec. 8 at 49ers Dec. 15 Ravens Dec. 22 Steelers	Sept. 1 Bengals 26-16 Sept. 8 at 49ers 0-34 Sept. 15 OPEN Sept. 22 Redskins Sept. 29 at Cardinals Oct. 6 49ers Oct. 13 at Panthers Oct. 20 Jaguars Oct. 27 at Ravens Nov. 3 at Steelers Nov. 10 Falcons Nov. 17 Panthers Nov. 24 Packers Dec. 1 at Saints Dec. 8 Bears Dec. 15 at Falcons Dec. 21 Saints	Sept. 1 at 49ers 17-17 Sept. 8 Panthers 20-22 Sept. 15 at Bengals Sept. 22 Cardinals Sept. 29 at Ravens Oct. 6 Jaguars Oct. 13 Bears Oct. 20 at Panthers Oct. 27 OPEN Nov. 3 49ers Nov. 10 Oilers Nov. 17 at Falcons Nov. 24 at Buccaneers Dec. 1 Rams Dec. 8 Falcons Dec. 15 at Giants Dec. 21 at Rams

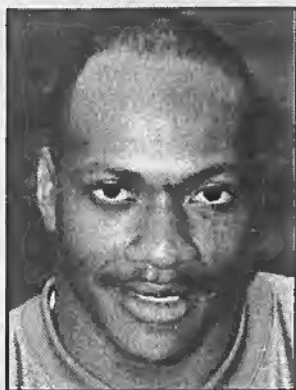
McElhenny made a splash with the 49ers right away. He played in a college all-star game on a Friday night, the day he was to report to the 49ers' training camp. He reported to the Niners on Saturday and was in uniform Sunday for a exhibition game against the Bears. Then quarterback Frankie Albert convinced Head Coach Buck Shaw to put McElhenny in the game, even though he didn't know the plays. Albert drew one up in the dirt, pitched the ball to McElhenny and watched him dash for a touchdown.

Concerning the Seahawks recent plight and owner Ken Behring's desire to move the team to Los Angeles, McElhenny said, "Behring's not happy with the Kingdome and for good reason. I don't see why the media are so tough on him. It might be for other reasons. I know he's a womanizer, but that has nothing to do with running a football team."

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PLAYER PERSPECTIVE

GOOD HEALTH KEY TO DEFENSE



T I M
McDONALD

One of the reasons our defense is playing well is we have stayed healthy. When everybody is healthy you work on the cohesion and build the chemistry.

You can do more early, because you've practiced together, played together and

you have done everything. Normally that takes until mid-season because guys are getting hurt and other players are shuffling in and out.

JUST THE FACT we had a healthy defense all training camp will give us a head-start over where we were at this point last year. I hope we will continue to play well. I know George Seifert does a good job of structuring practice so that later in the season he cuts back the contact. He does a good job of not getting us tired to where we're susceptible to injury.

I think this defense has a lot of talent. So many of these guys have been together for a few seasons now. Ken Norton, Gary Plummer and Lee Woodall have been playing right next to each other now for two years and they know each other.

Even the new guys we've brought in have done well. Chris Doleman and Roy Barker have fit in well because their basic job is to rush the quarterback.

I think that's what makes us better. We have the cohesion that comes from guys playing together, and in

this era of free agency with clubs seeing players constantly moving around. People underestimate the value of cohesiveness and experience. We have both.

We also have all-around good guys. They're real easy to get along with and that makes a difference. Character makes a big difference and we have a lot of character.

WHEN YOU GET ALONG, it makes communication a lot better. You can talk about any problem that might come up. This is the closest defense I've ever been involved with.

Having Merton Hanks signed also helps. It means I don't have to massage him, and soothe him and talk to him about how it's going to get done. I was always saying, "Don't worry Merton. It's going to get taken care of. Everything is going to be all right. You are going to be a very happy man."

I think Merton kind of hired me as his personal contract mate. I had been through it many times, and it worked out well for him. It's out of the way and it's one less thing he has to worry about. Now he can just concentrate on football, because football is tough. It's tough to concentrate when your livelihood and future are being talked about. We are all human.

I have been through it practically every year I've been here, and we talked about it

all the time; about what it's like to go through some of those things. We just talked about going out to practice, and just playing the game, and those other things usually just take care of themselves.

Merton's style complements me. I'm more of a run-stopping guy. He's more of a sideline-to-sideline guy who can run down passes and he's a good coverage free safety who can match up on the wide receiver. I'm more of the rugged guy who can make a lot of plays underneath.

With Merton we don't have to go in a nickel defense right away when the offense comes out in a three-wide receiver set. We can play base defense against a lot of sets.

Maybe I shouldn't speak too soon. We've only played one game as this is written. And besides, injuries have struck this team, but they've mostly been on offense so far. Only Plummer (hand) has been injured from the defense, and Kevin Mitchell has played well in Gary's place.

With any luck we'll stay pretty healthy. With the salary cap and free agency spreading talent kind of evenly around the league, injuries are an even bigger factor.

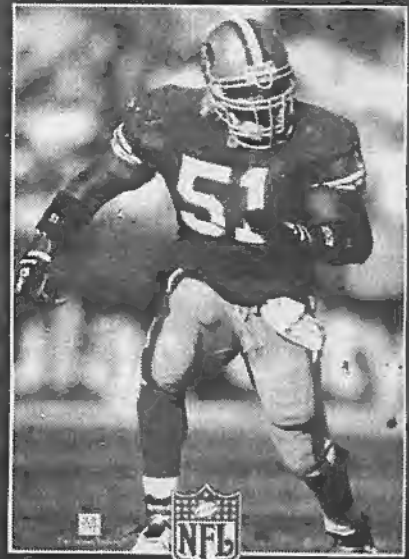
It takes a certain amount of luck to win in the NFL. I'm hoping we'll have it.



Tim McDonald

Tim McDonald is donating his fee for writing this column to the Omega Boy Club.

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